DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 334 730 EC 300 465

AUTHOR	Wren, Carol; And Others
TITLE	College and the High School Student with Learning Disabilities: The Student's Perspective.
INSTITUTION	De Paul Univ., Chicago, Ill.
SPONS AGENCY	Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	87
NOTE	39p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Director, Project Learning Strategies, DePaul University, SAC 220, 2323 N. Seminary, Chicago, IL 60614 ($2.00, prepaid with a self-addressed envelope).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Case Studies; *College Bound Students; College Choice; *College Preparation; College Students; Higher Education; High Schools; Intervention; *Learning Disabilities; Parent Role; Personal Narratives; School Role; Student Characteristics; Student Experience

ABSTRACT

This booklet discusses the possibility of college for learning-disabled student and encourages high school students interested in going on to college to carefully prepare themselves. The booklet offers the personal stories of two learning disabled (LD) students, one of whom was diagnosed as LD in third grade while the other was not diagnosed until college. Their stories appear on the left-hand page of each two-page section, and general information related to their experience follows on the facing right-hand page. The booklet covers: common problems of LD students, coping with feelings, talking to teachers and friends, getting special help, coping in mainstreamed classes, working toward college, roadblocks to success, how high schools can help, how parents can help, finding a college, planning a college schedule, making good use of LD programs, and strategies for success. The booklet concludes with a glossary and a list of three organizations, three directories, and four other publications on LD issues. (JDD)

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COLLEGE AND THE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

The Student's Perspective

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Carol Wren
Pamela Adelman
Miriam Benjamin Pike
John L. Wilson

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Carol Wren
Pamela Adelman
Miriam Benjamin Pike
John L. Wilson

DePaul University

AUTHORS
Carol T. Wren, Associate Professor, DePaul University; Director, Project Learning Strategies
Pamela Adelman, Associate Professor, Barat College; Director, Learning Opportunities Program
Miriam Benjamin Pike, Learning Disabilities Teacher, Deerfield High School
John L. Wilson, Social Worker, Deerfield High School

CONTRIBUTORS
Dee Konrad, Assistant Professor, Barat College; Writing Specialist, Learning Opportunities Program
Debbie Olufs, Instructor, Barat College; Assistant Director, Learning Opportunities Program

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
The preparation and printing of this booklet is supported by a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE). Dr. Adelman's participation in this project was made possible by a grant from the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation.

PROJECT LEARNING STRATEGIES
For more information about PROJECT LEARNING STRATEGIES (PLuS!), a comprehensive support program for learning disabled students at DePaul University, write to: Director, Project Learning Strategies, DePaul University, Schmidt Academic Center, Rm. 220, 2323 N. Seminary, Chicago, 60614.

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COLLEGE AND THE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES
The Student's Perspective

What is college like – and what is it like for learning disabled students? In particular, is college a realistic possibility for you? Are there things you should be doing right now, while you're still in high school? This booklet discusses these questions in terms of the personal stories of two learning disabled students, Cory and Chris. Their stories appear on the left side of each two-page section of this booklet. General information related to their experience follows on the facing page at the right.

Through their own descriptions of what it was like in high school and college, we can see more clearly what it means to have a learning disability. It means that incoming or outgoing information often becomes fuzzy or scrambled while it is processed by the brain. Of course, everyone has difficulties now and then processing information. For example, there are days when concentrating and paying attention seem nearly impossible. Or a person may have occasional difficulty retrieving a specific word, even though it is on the tip of his or her tongue. In learning disabled (LD) individuals, however, processing problems like these significantly interfere with academic or social development.

It is only recently that people have begun to recognize how persistent learning disabilities can be, even for intelligent students. Frustrated and misunderstood, these students often dropped out of high school. Others found themselves placed in vocational classes that failed to tap their potential. Even those LD students who did go on to enroll in college tended to drop out because of a lack of help or understanding. This booklet has been written for high school students as well as their teachers, counselors, and parents. It discusses the nature of learning disabilities and the impact of a disability at both the high school and college levels.

Perhaps you are a high school student interested in going on to college. If so, you need to do some serious thinking about college and what needs to be done while you are still in high school. It is important to examine very carefully your reasons for considering college, because college isn't necessary or appropriate for everyone. But if you think that college might be for you, this booklet will give you some things to think about.

"Understanding LD can be difficult . . .

CORY: "Hi. I'm Cory. I'm just starting my sophomore year in college. But I haven't forgotten what it was like in high school. It was a good time for me. I first knew I had a learning disability when I was in first grade. A learning disability is like any other disability, but in this case it's the learning process that is disturbed. There is something that's stopping me from learning in the average way. I know it's not that I can't learn. I can, but I learn differently and it's often much harder for me. My main problems are in auditory perception and memory. This in turn means that I have difficulty with reading and spelling, and also with remembering what I hear.

"I think it would help me if I knew more about learning disabilities. If I knew more about LD, it might make it easier for me to work with it instead of fighting against it so much. This learning disability is a part of me. If I don't understand it how can I understand myself, or let other people know about me? It's almost a shame to call it a learning disability; I just learn *differently.* For example, my friends can study with music on. But just because I can't, doesn't mean I have a disability. I'm just different, and maybe they are different in other ways."

CHRIS: "My name's Chris and I'm a freshman. Although college is difficult, in some ways I'm doing better than I did in high school. It wasn't easy for me in high school, and I don't know how I would have made it without my special education teacher. I first realized I had a learning disability in high school. That is, they diagnosed me in third grade, but I never really realized it until high school; it never really hit me.

"A learning disability is an impairment in the way you learn that can affect your reading, writing, or math. It can also affect your nonverbal skills, and it is thought to be neurological. My learning disability is mainly visual, so I have problems with reading, with math, and with charts and graphs. Also writing research papers is hard for me...that's murder."

COMMON PROBLEMS OF LEARNING DISABLED STUDENTS

As the stories of Cory and Chris illustrate, learning disabilities are not easy to understand. LD students often live with considerable frustration and anxiety throughout grade school and high school. They don't understand why some things are so difficult while others are relatively easy. It is important for college-bound LD students to be as clear as possible about the nature of learning disabilities in general, as well as about their own specific disability.

Students with learning disabilities usually have areas of difficulty that contrast sharply with other areas where they excel. Some students may learn well by listening, but have extreme difficulty reading. Others may express themselves well orally, but spell or write poorly. Each LD student has a unique combination of strengths and weaknesses, but in every case the deficits make learning especially difficult. For example, a visual perceptual deficit may interfere directly with reading and indirectly with other skills such as writing. LD students, although they have average or even superior intelligence, experience problems in one or more of the following areas: reading, writing, math, oral language, study skills, and social skills. Often, their learning disabilities are inconsistent or sporadic, causing problems one day but not the next. Similarly, they may cause problems in only one specific area, or they may surface in many areas.

The causes of learning disabilities are still not clearly understood, but they are presumed to be the result of various neurophysiological dysfunctions. Even so, it is important to note that students who receive appropriate services can minimize many of these deficits, and can learn to compensate for others.

It is also important to recognize what learning disabilities are *not*. They are not forms of mental retardation or emotional disorder, and they are not the result of cultural or ethnic differences. Students who are underprepared or come from a different language background may have some of the same surface problems with spoken or written language that LD students have. However, these problems are not the result of a processing deficit and thus such students are not learning disabled.

"I'm special . . .

CORY: "It's difficult. Sometimes I feel so inadequate, and I ask myself, 'What's wrong with me?' Occasionally I feel sorry for myself and ask, 'Why me?' It's important to ask those questions and get them out in the open. Then you can try to deal with them, and not let them bog you down. Because I found out about my learning disability so early, much of the anxiety and low self-esteem I felt was in junior high. I tried to hide the fact that I was going for special help. I would wait for the beli and try to slip into my classes at the last minute. But the other kids would ask, 'Are you going to the retarded teacher?' It seems like all my problems magnified when I tried to hide them.

"High school was a much better time for me. I had friends and went out for sports and activities, which really helped me feel better about myself. When I was with my friends I could forget my learning disability. Also, I had a job, and that was wonderful because I got lots of positive attention, and I felt like I could do something well. But I still have questions, especially 'Why me?,' that stay in my mind for a real long time.

"But you know, a learning disability makes you feel special in a good way too. So often in high school I got caught up in being just like everyone else, looking the same, acting the same. I began to wonder what was important or special about me. And then I realized I learn in a different way. You know, everyone learns a little bit differently; but my way of learning is unique to me and that's neat."

CHRIS: "Sometimes having a learning disability doesn't feel different at all, but at other times it really does. It's frustrating. I don't like having LD because on the one hand I feel like I can't do many things, but on the other hand I know I can! I have to compensate for a lot of things.

"I compared myself to others a lot. When it came to grades, I always came out the last in the class or second to last, especially in the regular classes. There was a lot of competition and that didn't help my self-esteem very much. I had to prepare myself every time grades came out. My friends would always ask me what I got and that would hurt. I honestly did not like high school. It wasn't a good time for me."

COPING WITH YOUR FEELINGS

By now you are probably well aware that frustration is the most common feeling associated with learning disabilities. Like Chris, many LD students are frustrated because some things are so difficult, while others come easily. Others, like Cory, find it difficult to deal with the idea of not wanting to be different from their peers. It may help if you:

Put adolescence in perspective. Many of your feelings are a result, not of any learning disability, but of the normal developmental experience of all adolescents. Every teenager has feelings of anxiety about not fitting in, anger at teachers and parents, confusion about goals for the future. It's true that you have an additional task, namely, integrating your learning disability into your life so it won't overwhelm you. But everyone has worries and insecurities, especially concerning vocational choices and college possibilities.

Deal with the issue of independence. Because of your learning disability, establishing independence may be especially complicated. A strong mutual dependence can develop when parents have been heavily involved in your education. You or they may have a hard time letting go. Leaving home can be a difficult problem that requires patience, understanding, and a good deal of talking to resolve.

Feel comfortable with yourself. The more you can deal with your feelings about school and about your learning disability, the more likely you are to make the best possible choice for yourself after high school. If you don't feel comfortable with yourself, success in college is put at risk. To deal with your feelings you have to get them out in the open. Sit down and have a dialogue with yourself. Put your feelings about past experiences into perspective.

Realize that you are not alone. Teachers, counselors, friends, or parents can help you talk about things that you need to put into perspective. If you feel uncomfortable talking to your parents, a teacher or counselor can convey your feelings to them. Consider setting up a three-way conference, with a teacher or counselor to help you express your ideas, and to help your parents understand them.

Set yourself up for success. Because of your learning disability, it is vitally important that your vocational or college choice be as right for you as it possibly can. If you can deal with your negative feelings from the past, you will be more able to see your strengths, and this will help you set reachable goals. If you know yourself well, you can decide if college is the best option for you. If you understand your learning style and the effects your disability will have, you will be able to develop compensatory strategies that will help you in college.

"It's hard to explain . . .

CORY: "I talked a lot about my learning disability with my parents and my teachers and friends. These people accepted it and really helped me get through. Having someone to talk to—a parent, a friend, a counselor—is very important, especially because everyone has some kind of problem in high school. And if you also have LD, it can easily just get wrapped around your legs and you'll fall right over. Those are the kids you see getting in fights, because they don't understand their learning disability and other people don't understand them.

"When I had to explain about my learning disability to people—to new teachers, for example—they would usually ask questions that were just factual. But I tried to tell them about my feelings too. If they were inquisitive, it didn't bother me. In fact, it was actually OK sometimes because I got some attention. Of course, a lot depended on how they received what I was telling them. If they were disgusted or ignorant they made me feel stupid. A teacher's openness could really have a big effect on how hard I worked in a particular class. If they were interested and willing to listen to my feelings, I usually made a better effort. If they made me feel stupid, then I didn't try."

CHRIS: "I didn't talk much about my learning disability with people in high school, either to my teachers or to other kids. It was taboo. I never told anybody because I thought they would act differently toward me. I was afraid that the kids wouldn't walk with me if they knew. I was quite reserved, I know. And in this sense my learning disability did affect me socially; I didn't try to get into the popular group, for example."

TALKING TO TEACHERS AND FRIENDS

Talking about your learning disability can be difficult. Many students wonder what they should say to a teacher. Some students, like Chris, find it easier to stay home than be in uncomfortable situations with peers. Others find it embarrassing to have peers ask questions about why they go for special help. Involve a teacher or parent in figuring out how to talk about your specific learning disability. Try some rehearsing or role playing.

TALKING TO TEACHERS:

Know what your problem is. Be able to describe concisely how your learning disability will interfere in a particular class. For example, spelling problems may interfere with your ability to take good notes, write reports, and take essay exams. If you are vague, teachers won't know how to help. Be prepared to answer four questions they tend to ask: (1) What *are* learning disabilities? (2) What is *your* specific learning disability? (3) How can I help you *learn?* (4) How can I help you *demonstrate* your knowledge?

Know what you are willing to do to succeed. Be sure that it's not just the teacher who makes accommodations. Start by indicating that you intend to make an extra effort for this class in some specific way. Then discuss what accommodations need to be made by the teacher.

Talk to teachers when they have time to listen. Don't catch them a minute before class. Talk to them *before* you are having serious problems. Surprise revelations are interpreted by teachers as excuses. Instead, say that you do not anticipate a problem, but you will let them know if problems arise. Special education teachers will go with you to talk to your teachers until you feel comfortable doing this on your own.

TALKING TO FRIENDS:

Don't hide it. Trying to hide your learning disability carries an enormous emotional cost. As Cory discovered, it's bound to come out somehow, so your energy is better used in feeling comfortable with it.

Start by telling one or two best friends. Trust them. Their accepting reaction will give you confidence to tell others if you need to.

Meet questions with a straight answer. If someone asks, "What are you doing, going into that room?" answer, "I'm not doing very well in math, so I'm getting some help." Practice a few replies like this and have them ready. Being defensive, embarrassed, or flustered invites more questions, and turns simple curiosity into teasing. If you handle things in a straightforward way, others will too.

CORY: "I didn't get help from an LD specialist when I was in grade school, but I did have some tutoring. I was taken out of class for about an hour, and we worked on reading and spelling. Spelling was always my biggest problem. In junior high I also had a tutor who mostly gave me support for my classes. But we did work on reading comprehension and spelling...always spelling.

"LD specialists can help . . .

"I didn't take advantage of the LD program in high school. In fact, I avoided it. Mom and I had made a contract that if I needed help I would go get it. I went during my sophomore year to get some assistance with spelling, but at the time I felt it wasn't helping. Now I suspect that I wasn't putting very much effort into it. I just wasn't ready."

CHRIS: "I got a lot of resource help in high school. The special education teacher would go over my papers with me and help me correct them. We did a lot of reading together, and she planned out my time with me. She planned out my weeks: when I should have my outline finished, when I should finish the rough draft. That really helped enormously because I didn't feel I was running out of time. That was a lot of my problem, just needing more time to get things done. Frequently, I would take a test and I knew the material, because I had studied it. But I would go into class and I just couldn't get it down on paper, because there wasn't enough time.

"My reactions to the resource room were pretty positive. Sometimes I felt I had to do too many worksheets; it was as if once I got finished with the worksheet, I could forget it. I wasn't really responsible for the material. But I did learn a lot about getting organized, about how to manage my time better, and how to study better. But most of all it was important for me to know that someone understood my problems. She could teach me in a way I understood."

GETTING SPECIAL HELP

Resource programs are designed to give LD students the support they need to succeed in high school. How can you make the most of this help?

Know about your school's resource program. Not all resource programs are alike. They vary according to the philosophy and training of the special education teacher. Programs can focus on (1) tutoring in mainstreamed courses, (2) remediation in basic skills, and (3) developing study skills and learning strategies. Talk to the special education teacher about the focus of your program.

Know why you are in the resource program. If you are getting resource help but don't know why, find out. So often students are reluctant to ask, assuming it is because they are dumb, being punished, or that their teachers don't like them. Not so! Talk to your special education teacher about what you can expect to get out of the program.

Put the resource program in perspective. By being clear about your specific strengths and weaknesses, you can overcome any stigma attached to getting extra help. If the resource classroom is separate from the other classrooms, your may feel more exposed. Talk to your teacher about the possibility of moving the resource room to a better location. Meet curiosity from other students with short, low-key replies. Don't let other people's comments reduce your self-esteem.

Make the resource room work for you. Understand the purpose, the structure, and the daily routine in the resource room. Legitimate activities include directly academic ones such as remediation, tutoring for classes, or work on organization and study skills. They may also include more indirect but nevertheless important purposes such as advocacy, test proctoring, planning and time management, goal setting, problem solving, advising, and just talking things over. However, resource rooms are not study halls or places for socializing.

Develop a new relationship with your teacher. In addition to teaching, he or she is there to support you, to be your advocate and your partner in learning, if you will permit it. This requires a more open attitude on your part; communication – lots of it! – is the key. It may be hard to trust a teacher to that extent at first, but it can be great to know that you don't have to face your problems alone.

Know if it isn't working for you. If you feel you don't do anything in the resource room, or that you don't benefit from it, you may need to change the focus of the work you are doing there. If you feel that you truly don't need the resource room, talk it over and then replace it with another class or study hall. If you run into a problem you can always go back.

"Regular classes were tough . . .

CORY: "When people ask me how I did in high school, I say, 'I did fine.' But that's not true. Sure, I did fine in the sense that I passed my classes and graduated, but really I didn't do 'fine.' Since I didn't want remedial help—even though I needed it—I got frustrated and just didn't study. I compensated enough to pass my classes, but I was just lucky. The real reason I didn't do 'fine' was that I didn't work up to my potential. It was so important to me to be normal, average, just like everyone else, that I wasn't willing to work up to my potential. So I got lower grades. In one sense, wanting to be like everyone else had a good effect. It forced me into mainstreamed classes so I could be with my friends. But in another sense, wanting to be average worked against me. I know I could have done better, because in my senior year I did. I got really scared because my grade point average was so low, and I really started studying."

CHRIS: "I was mostly in developmental classes in my freshman and sophomore year. Then they decided I needed to get into some regular classes if I wanted to go to college. I didn't feel comfortable around some of the other students in my developmental classes, but I see now that I needed to start off at that level. In the regular classes, I was a year behind. For example, my senior year I was in junior English. I got mostly C's and some B's. I was very frustrated, especially in English, but I think I was placed at the right level. A lot of the time I kept it inside of me, which was not good, you know, but I really had no one to talk to. When it got really bad, I'd go and talk to the special education teacher.

"I didn't talk about my LD with my regular teachers very much, only with the special education teacher. I do remember one English teacher, though, who could tell I was LD because of my work. She approached me before I approached her. She said that she understood, and that we would work with it. That made me feel much better! She was the one who taught me to do a research paper."

COPING IN MAINSTREAMED CLASSES

Reasonable success in mainstreamed classes is essential if you are considering college. But selecting them presents two dilemmas: (1) The need for college-bound courses conflicts with the need for good grades. (2) The need for courses that emphasize strengths conflicts with the need for those that work on weaknesses. In each case, avoid one or the other extreme. Remember, *balance* is the key.

Balance your classes. Get the best advice you can to plan a schedule that will balance college-bound and basic skills classes with classes that you find easier or more fun. If your high school has several levels of the same course, get help in selecting the right level, so you can balance your schedule. Here are some things to remember: (1) Good grades give you more options later, whether you choose college or a vocation. (2) Class rank and grade point average are important in college admissions. (3) An extra year of modified math, history, or science is better preparation for college than not taking the class at all. (4) Being at the bottom of the class all the time, like Chris, is discouraging and creates self-esteem problems. No one ever complains about getting good grades!

Get the overview of each class. Every class has ground rules, but not every teacher spells them out with equal clarity. Prepare a list of questions and ask your teacher, or a classmate about (1) the amount and type of homework, (2) specific class requirements, (3) the type of quizzes and exams, (4) the relative weight given to homework, class participation, and tests, and (5) the amount of reading to be done.

Plan ahead for class participation. If your learning disability interferes with your participation in class discussions, oral reading, or contribution to group projects, ask teachers to alert you ahead of time so that you can prepare. You can also ask them to modify the types of questions they ask in a class discussion, so as to minimize specific problems such as difficulty with recall of facts or oral expression.

Consider alternative test arrangements. Tests and grades present a special problem. True, you don't want to be different or have teachers think you are taking the easy way out. However, tests don't let you demonstrate what you've learned, and grades don't reflect what you know. The key is to understand how your learning disability interferes with taking tests or expressing what you know. Then be willing to accept appropriate assistance and accommodations.

Identify potential problems quickly. If problems arise, tell someone right away. It is easier to prevent problems than to find yourself in a situation where you need to be rescued. Learning to solve problems is an important skill in itself; special education teachers can only be your advocate if they know there is a problem.

"Some strategies worked well . . .

CORY: "Some things I did in high school helped later in college, like going to every class. I know some kids with LD who were so frustrated that they just wouldn't go to class. But to my parents, school was very important, so I just kept trying. It seems so obvious, but the most important thing was to take regular courses and even some college-bound ones. My senior English class is a good example. It was so intense that I haven't found a single college course that was harder. I was capable of doing harder work, if I put in the time: I just needed an extra push.

"I grew up a lot my last year in high school. Before that I just didn't study; I didn't realize how important it was. I just wanted to be normal, and my goal was to be like everybody else. Then I realized that since everyone was so much like everyone else, it wasn't good enough just to be normal: I had to be better. So I set the goal to do really well in sports and also to do well enough to get into college. I met my goal in sports, and senior year I started doing it with grades."

CHRIS: "There were several things that helped me in high school. I developed lots of strategies for compensating for my problems. I would study a week ahead of the class; I would redo my notes and tape record my classes. In spelling I tried to sound out everything phonetically, which is a good strategy only some of the time. If I didn't remember someone's name (names have always been difficult) I'd ask them how they spell it. That helped me to memorize it. I also use a lot of little mnemonics; for example, I have some rhymes to remember the order of operations in math.

"Something that my special education teacher taught me that helped me was goal setting. I would set short-term goals for myself, such as, 'If I finish my math homework, I can go watch TV.' I really don't know how I would have passed high school without that teacher. She had high expectations for me, which made me feel good. She was determined for me to do well and kept saying 'You can do it and I'll help you.'"

WORKING TOWARD COLLEGE

As Chris and Cory note, college preparatory classes are important. They should be taken whenever possible. College expectations are high, and of course the courses there will be mainstreamed. Begin early in high school to improve basic skills, develop good organization and study strategies, and investigate college entrance procedures.

Take courses that will improve basic skills. Even though you may be tired of working on them, basic skills are vital for college success. In particular, concentrate on improving reading comprehension, since college students have to learn by reading large amounts of material on their own. Comprehension strategies such as previewing each chapter help enormously.

Develop a system for organizing materials. Organization of handouts, notes, and assignment sheets is essential to cope with the pressure of college. One technique is to color code all materials, book covers, notebooks, folders with pockets for handouts – in effect, everything. A color-coded filing system is also useful.

Develop a realistic study schedule. Determine whether you study best when you schedule frequent breaks, or when you set specific short-term goals and rewards (food, TV time, a phone call to a friend). Also, ask whether you study better in the morning or in the evening.

Learn to use auxiliary aids. Use a tape recorder to fill in notes that you missed in class. Tape recording lectures is common practice in college, and developing this skill in high school will give you a head start. Use a tape recorder with a counter, set to zero at the beginning of the class. When you don't understand something being said, jot down the number on the counter in the margin of your notebook. Then you can quickly find the sections you need to listen to again. Keep your tapes for the entire course, in case you need them for a final exam. If appropriate, arrange for books on tape.

Start investigating colleges early. Begin in your junior year. It's important to find a college that matches your needs, so plan enough time to visit campuses and LD programs. You may need to allow extra time to be retested, in order to clarify the nature of your learning disability. Some LD programs have waiting lists that make it necessary to apply early. If appropriate, arrange with your high school to take ACT or SAT tests untimed, or with a reader. Taking these test under special conditions should not penalize you in any way when applying for college admission but each college's policy must be determined separately.

CORY: "Of course, some of the things I did (and didn't do) in high school got in the way of reaching my goals. I just didn't study until my senior year. I guess not studying was a due to a lack of maturity, and that's sad, but immaturity is part of being a teenager. So much depends on mental attitude, and if you're not ready to learn then not much will happen. But when you are ready, you can do it. I found that out here last semester. I was ready and my spelling improved so much!

"Other things didn't work at all. . .

"I should have made sure my basic skills were in better shape. Notetaking needs to be strong in college, but how can you take notes if you can't spell? Back then I felt angry about getting help. I was tired of working on spelling and it made me different. I just tried to ignore my problems. Now I'm glad to get help because I'm not going to have another chance to get it. I'll have to do it on my own out in the business world. Also, I should have taken notes with a tape recorder because of my auditory short-term memory problem. But I tried to compensate in ways that wouldn't make me stand out. I learned to use abbreviations for words I couldn't spell, and I borrowed notes from other people...those were things that everyone did."

CHRIS: "Some things could have gone better, I'm sure. I was too quiet. I never said anything. I was always the quiet person in the back of the class. Also, I would have been better off if I had been able to talk about my learning disability, but I was just too uncomfortable about it. Something else that was missing was really zeroing in on things that I missed in grade school. We should have tried to fill in the gaps. For example, we should have gone back in math to the facts, to fractions, so that lack of the basics wouldn't affect me later. I should have tried harder to get into the senior courses. It's important to know as much as you can and have good skills before you get to college. It's also important to try to know yourself. Don't let people tell you that you can't make it to college if you think you can."

ROADBLOCKS TO SUCCESS

When Chris and Cory looked back on their high school education, they realized that certain attitudes and behaviors interfered with success. These are mental roadblocks you may encounter on the way through high school to college:

Not facing up to your learning disability. Many LD students are like Cory. Getting special help was difficult because she feared her friends' reactions and didn't want to be different. But if you don't face it, you won't receive help from the teachers who generally have the best understanding of your learning needs.

Avoiding hard work. It's just human nature to focus on what you do most easily and to avoid working on problem areas. Cutting classes is another way of avoiding hard work. But problems won't disappear, and ignoring them prevents future success. The key is finding a balance between capitalizing on your strengths and working on your problem areas. It's not desirable to work only on your disability. But avoiding it can hinder you later on.

Being afraid to take reasonable risks. It's also human nature to take courses that are not so challenging. If you are good in art, but have difficulty writing papers, it's much easier to take another art course. Again, the key is finding a balance between the satisfaction of doing well in an easier class and taking a reasonable risk on a more challenging one.

Setting unrealistic goals. Students who set unrealistic expectations create situations that prevent success. Getting involved in too many extra-curricular activities interferes with important study time for classes. Enrolling in a course that you aren't prepared for can result in frustration and failure. Parents, teachers, or counselors can help you develop and coordinate realistic short- and long-term goals.

If you see yourself in any of these cases, your attitudes may be keeping you from success. Changing attitudes is very important but not an easy thing to do. You can:

Find someone to talk to. A high school counselor, a teacher, coach, special education teacher, or relative can help you sort things out. Realize that you don't have to face these things alone.

Recognize your strengths, both personal and academic. It's just as important to understand what you do well as it is to understand your learning disability.

Feel comfortable with yourself. Try to think of yourself as a person who happens to have a learning disability, rather than just as a learning disabled person. Don't let your learning disability color your whole life.

"Teachers make a real difference . . .

CORY: "During my senior year my teachers could tell that I was working hard. They saw a change in me, and I guess I responded to that. One teacher took me aside and said that if I kept on working, I had the potential to go to college. When you're seventeen, you don't always know what you want. You're not so likely to be in tune with yourself, but teachers can be more objective. It's so easy to get discouraged, living with a learning disability every day. It feels good to have someone recognize your potential and have high expectations. Kids need to have someone direct them toward good alternatives.

"When I did go to get help with spelling, the special education teacher made sure that my parents knew what I was working on. She talked to my mom a lot about my learning disability, so my mom could understand how to help me at home. I know now that I should have stayed with the resource help, but at the time it made me feel too different from my friends."

CHRIS: "I don't think my relationships with my regular teachers ever interfered with my learning, but things weren't always great. I wasn't a bad student, but I've had a couple of teachers who didn't like teaching me. I could see it in their faces and in the way they'd grit their teeth. I felt a lot of teachers didn't understand that I needed extra time, or that maybe they needed to explain things to me differently. I know they didn't want to take the time to explain things a different way to me in class. So I would say, 'Can you meet me at lunch, after school, before school?' But a lot of them said no.

"In my case it was my special education teacher who really helped me the most. She had confidence that I could make it. Even though I resisted it, she also helped me understand my learning disability. She showed me where my strengths were and helped me work on the weaknesses. She got me interested in photography. It helped to know there was something I could do really well. We worked a lot on study skills and time management, things that helped me do better in my classes."

HOW HIGH SCHOOLS CAN HELP

High school personnel can help make college a realistic possibility for capable LD students. As Cory suggests, teachers need to help students recognize their potential and sort out *all* the post-secondary alternatives, both vocational and educational.

SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS CAN:

Ensure that the students understand the LD program. Don't assume your students know why they are in the LD program, what their learning disability is, how their learning style is related to their learning disability, or how a disability affects classroom performance. Teachers can ask them what they do understand, and proceed from there to explain, concretely and frequently. To be concrete, teachers need to identify and label the student's learning disability, learning style, and every strategy used. Labeling gives students an awareness of the strategies they use so that they can continue to use them and understand why they are important. They also need to understand the purpose of remedial activities, and how they will benefit from them. Don't assume that students will grasp these things intuitively.

Teach self-advocacy skills. In addition to understanding their learning disability, students need to understand how it will interfere with class performance and what compensatory strategies are appropriate, so they can communicate these things to others. Identifying and labeling problems and strategies is the basis of self-advocacy. It is this that will give students the vocabulary and confidence they need to talk to their teachers.

Balance services. Balance tutoring and by-pass strategies with remediation in basic skills. These are important for college success. While taped books and word-processing systems are helpful, LD college students almost unanimously recognize the need for improved basic skills.

Expose students to role models. Arrange for successful seniors to talk to freshman and sophomores, or arrange a big brother program. Also arrange for successful LD college students to talk to the juniors and seniors.

Offer support and information to parents. Parents may not be emotionally or cognitively ready to grasp an explanation of their child's difficulties or the services that are provided. They may need to have concepts reexplained in different ways as they work through the various stages of coping with a learning disability. Parents may also need help in dealing with their feelings about their own past educational experiences, and with their feelings about the issue of independence. Help them understand how to support their sons and daughters and how to enable them to take increasing responsibility for their own learning.

"Counselors make a difference too . . .

CORY: "I was lucky to have a counselor that knew something about learning disabilities. I spent a lot of time in her office when I needed someone to talk to at school. My teachers weren't always free, but I felt I could stop in to talk to my counselor. I don't know how I would have found the right college without her. She explained so much to me about different kinds of colleges, and tried to help me find the one that was right for me. She had college catalogs for me to look at and brochures about different LD programs. It took me a long time to decide where I wanted to go. It's not just a question of deciding to go anywhere there's an LD program. My parents helped me understand that because of my specific learning disability I had to find the college that was right for me. We took a trip one summer and visited colleges, and that was terrific. I just never knew how different colleges could be. Seeing them for myself, talking to the LD specialists there, helped me make a good choice."

CHRIS: "If I could do high school over again, I would change the teachers, for one thing. I would raise their expectations, and put more flexibility into how you can learn and achieve. Also, I think many LD students need courses like reading strategies and developmental writing to learn how to write a well-formed paragraph. And a special course in study skills and organization would have helped me a lot.

"Our high school really could have helped more in terms of helping me find college opportunities. It's so hard to get started. There should have been a listing of different colleges and opportunities for kids with LD. My counselor told me I would never make it in college. He told me point blank. But I told him, 'Well, I want to go.' He suggested I could look for a job at department store or in a nursing home. His major goal for me was to be a forest ranger, but I couldn't do that with my allergies. I didn't know what I wanted to do, but I wanted more alternatives than those!"

HOW HIGH SCHOOLS CAN HELP (Continued)

SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS ALSO CAN:

Assist parents with applying to college. A reevaluation during a student's junior year is highly advisable, since an update can help in assessing college possibilities. A clear picture of strengths and weaknesses is perhaps the single most valuable piece of information in planning for college. Recent testing is almost always required by college LD programs.

Build post-secondary planning into the curriculum. Help parents understand the importance of looking for the best match between their teenager's needs and a college program. They should not have to do this on their own or struggle to find information on post-secondary options. High school programs should take an active role in providing parents and students the information and assistance they need.

REGULAR TEACHERS CAN:

Be understanding. A learning disability is a hidden but very real handicap. Both Cory and Chris felt quite strongly that they worked harder for those teachers who not only accepted their problems, but also had high expectations. These two attitudes are not contradictory, and give LD students the confidence they need to really try. LD students frequently work harder than the average student but see fewer results from their effort. They deal with enormous amounts of frustration and are not necessarily "trying to get away with something."

Be sensitive. Some types of learning disabilities can cause acute embarrassment in class. Allow students to prepare in advance for oral reading or class discussions. Modify questions during discussions to allow for problems with memory or verbal expression. Be open to other suggestions.

Be fair by being flexible. LD students are often at a big disadvantage in taking tests. By making certain accommodations such as an oral exam or extended time, teachers are in fact giving LD students a *fair chance* to express what they have learned.

COUNSELORS CAN:

Learn more about learning disabilities. Be aware of what you know and what you don't know about learning disabilities and college options for the learning disabled. Work together with the special education staff to provide a wide variety of information about post-secondary options for LD students.

Focus on career counseling. Help LD students develop career goals and decide whether what they want to do really requires college. Begin to develop awareness of career possibilities early.

"My parents believed in me . . .

CORY: "Although I didn't have the maturity to work really hard in high school, I wouldn't have made it at all without my parents. I didn't realize at the time how much they helped me. They had expectations, and they pushed me, but they didn't push too hard. They were there to listen and talk through my feelings. I always studied at the kitchen table, and Mom was there so I could ask her how to say a word or spell it. It was the little things like that, out of the blue, that were so important. Mom also helped me at school by talking to my teachers. Sometimes she probably felt like a fool complaining about something. But she always went.

"My parents also helped by keeping a balanced perspective and emphasizing the positive. 'Stupid' was a word we couldn't use. They let me know it was important to do my best and go to every class. They gave me the support, and I kept trying. If I got a D and if I had tried my best, that was OK. Also, they never paid us for grades; you study for yourself, not to get rewards from other people. It was just too important a thing to mess up.

"Their attitude toward my learning disability has been great. They helped me see it as a natural thing; everyone has difficulties, but in different degrees. A learning disability doesn't make you a better person or a worse person. It's just the way you are. They had confidence that I could do what I wanted to do. You just have to put your mind to it and do it."

CHRIS: "Things weren't easy for me at home during high school. My dad didn't live with us, and my mom never really knew how I was doing; she just stayed out of the whole situation. My grandmother and sister knew a little, but my mom never was involved. I don't mean she didn't love me or lacked confidence in me, but she never really helped with homework or things like that. I think she wanted to, but I had to have outside help. Also, although my mom realized I have LD, my dad really didn't believe it. It took five learning specialists to convince him. He just wouldn't accept it. He still thought I was a slow learner, that I wasn't LD. He thought I learned slowly because of some difficulty I'd had with my ears. In his eyes, I was just slow, but he didn't love me any less."

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP

Successful students, like Cory, frequently attribute much of their success to their parents, insisting, "I'd never have made it without them!" LD students need someone to accept them, support them, and believe in them. As parents, you can also help if you:

Understand the LD diagnosis. Be able to describe the learning disability and know how it will affect your son or daughter at school and at home. For example, a nonverbal learning disability can make it difficult to keep appointments or get home on time. Memory problems can make it hard to run errands without a specific list.

Accept the learning disability. Realize that you may need to adjust to it many times. For example, the dependence/independence issue involved in going away to college may cause the whole problem of accepting the learning disability to resurface. Make your home a relaxed and accepting place that is different from the often frustrating situation at school. Legitimate and genuine concern for LD adolescents often leads parents to be directive or critical. However these attitudes need to be balanced with large doses of reassurance and acceptance.

Understand your own feelings. Often parents react to their child's learning disability in terms of their own educational experiences. Understanding your feelings about your own past will help you be more objective about your child's experiences. Be realistic about expectations. Be sure that post-secondary decisions are made on the basis of what is best for your child, not on the basis of what you may want. This requires a candid and realistic appraisal of your own motives.

Communicate with the school and the community. Call promptly when problems arise. Be sure that your child is registered for appropriate courses. If necessary, be an advocate at school and at community, social, and sports activities.

Provide support for college decisions. Research a wide variety of post-secondary options. Since information is not centralized, it is difficult to obtain up-to-date data. Visit college LD programs, and help your son or daughter learn how to ask pertinent questions. A good deal of patience and time is required, but finding the *right* college is well worth the effort. Since options may be limited and the consequences of a poor choice are substantial, a good first choice is extremely important. Parents should provide their children with initial information, teach them how to obtain additional data, visit colleges, teach them how to ask the right questions, discuss the options, and model good decision-making strategies. But ultimately the decision must be theirs.

"Not just somewhere to go after high school . . .

CORY: "I understand college a bit better now – it's not just someplace you go after high school. It's a great place to mature, to get to know yourself, to get interested in different subjects. Plus it's interesting once you get into it, once you know more about it. Earlier I wanted to go to college because I didn't know what else I wanted to do. But I'm beginning to realize all the benefits I can get from it. Now that I'm in college I think you really have to want to do it for yourself, not just because your parents expect it.

"It's so important to look at all the different college choices and not settle on the first one. And be ready for rejection! All of my friends were accepted at a big state school and I wasn't. But now I'm glad. It's also good to look for a school with an LD program. In high school, I didn't need much backup help, but college is really a mental strain. It's nice to know that I have something to hold on to."

CHRIS: "I worked for a while after high school because I was tired of school. I wanted to go to college, but I knew I needed a break. Working was a good experience for me even though it wasn't an exciting job. It gave me some time to get myself together and get away from the frustration for a while.

"My dad was really great about helping me get into college. Mom wanted me to stay at home, but Dad helped a lot. He had really high expectations for me. I think he always wanted me to go to the best colleges, but realistically I never could have gotten in. Finally, when I sat down and talked to him on the phone, I told him I wanted a small college and I think he listened. He found four colleges with LD programs and helped me apply."

FINDING A COLLEGE

LOOKING FOR COLLEGES

The real challenge of college is staying in once you get there. So it is just as important to find the right college and the right LD services for you as it is to be accepted in the first place.

Ask yourself hard questions. Answer them as honestly as you can. (1) Am I willing to spend another four or more years in school? (2) Do I need assistance? (3) Am I willing to accept such assistance? (4) If so, what do I need? Help with basic skills? Books on tape? Modified papers? Extended time on tests? (5) Do I need a pre-college year to improve my reading, writing, or study skills? (6) Based on my life and career goals, do I want a vocational program, a 2- or 4-year college?

Look for a college that matches your needs. Visit colleges and ask them questions based on those you have already asked yourself. Make sure they provide the types of assistance you need. The sources listed at the end of this booklet will be helpful in making the final selection of a college.

WHAT COLLEGES LOOK FOR

Colleges and college LD programs have the same general goal as yours: matching needs and services. They are looking for students who are interested in learning and who possess the ability, maturity, and motivation to be successful. But standards of success vary, so rejection means only that you probably would not have been successful *at that institution*. Ability, maturity, and motivation are not easy to measure, but colleges may look at any of the following.

Ability: IQ tests, grades, class standing, achievement test scores, scores of tests measuring basic skills, scores of tests measuring the type and severity of the learning disability.

Maturity and motivation: High school attendance records, a balance of academic and extracurricular activities, and type of courses taken in high school. You may be asked to submit recommendations from teachers, who can evaluate persistence, willingness to work hard, and the understanding and acceptance of one's learning disability. More information can be gained from personal interviews. You may be asked such questions as: How much do you study? How do you feel about working on basic skills? How did you handle classes that you didn't like? Programs may also ask how much of the application process you handled yourself and how much your parents helped.

"Things are better in college . . .

CORY: "Even though I'm in college now, it still takes me longer to comprehend what I read. There are so many smaller ideas and details between the main concepts, it's as if the authors purposely set out decoys. Sometimes people don't believe how long it takes me to get certain things.

"Also, sometimes when I'm talking I have a little trouble getting my thoughts out. But it doesn't bother me when I'm socializing; it doesn't mean anything. And in a lot of my classes I don't find it a problem. But I do realize that my LD is still very much a part of me; it's always there, but it doesn't always bother me.

"My attitudes have changed a lot since high school. In high school I tried to ignore my learning disability. But now I really work on it. I work on phonics because I have a hard time hearing the sounds, so I actually practice them. I also practice writing every day in a journal, and I correct it. Then I take it to the LD program and we go over it, just so my writing skills will get stronger, because that's very important. It's the practice that helps. My communication skills still need a lot of work, but I think there is great potential there. I've been taking speech courses and I love the challenge. I have the feeling that my writing is not up to par but I could be a persuasive communicator someday. That's going to take maturity and work...lots of work."

CHRIS: "Now that I am in college things are really much better. I'm in an LD program, and they know exactly where my problems are so I can get specific help. I still have problems writing papers and organizing things, and I think I always will. But my spelling has really improved. (I've gone from a third grade level to a sixth grade level in one semester.) And I've noticed that I can cope with things better. I'm more organized. My learning disability doesn't affect me socially here in college. I do photography, and some riding. And academically, everybody is on such a different level, it just isn't a big thing.

"I feel a lot better about my LD now, too. I'm more open about it. Before, I didn't want to tell anybody about it. I find that it does still seem like a burden sometimes. But now when something is difficult I can put it down for a bit, go do something else, and then come back to it."

PLANNING YOUR COLLEGE SCHEDULE

Perhaps the most important factor in program planning is to seek out good advising. You will have to make course selection decisions as soon as you get to college, and understanding your learning disability will help you see how it will affect choosing college courses. Colleges don't always have advisors who understand learning disabilities, so it will be your responsibility to explain your needs and aggressively seek out the best advice you can get. Go out of your way to find someone who knows the teaching style and course requirements of different faculty members. Get in touch immediately with the LD program or Disabled Student Services (DSS) office, where guidance should be available. Through the DSS office, request priority in registration so that you get courses and a schedule that are appropriate for you. When selecting courses consider:

Course content and structure. You can minimize the effect of your learning disability by careful course selection. If you are a poor reader, start out with only one heavy reading course. If you are a poor notetaker, start out with courses based on class discussion instead of straight lecture. You may also want initially to avoid courses that put direct strain on your learning disability. For example, if you have visual processing problems, an art history course with numerous slides being flashed in a semi-dark room may be very difficult.

Number of credits. Especially in your freshman year, take the minimum number of credits necessary for full time-status (usually 12 semester credits). In some cases, it might be advisable to take a part-time load. When you take courses with heavy reading loads, reduce the total number of credits that semester. Be prepared to spend more than four years in college. Unlike high school, you are not forced to take a set number of courses, and there is no reason that you must go at the same pace as other students.

Combination of courses. Consider the types of courses and their requirements. If you have a writing problem, take no more than one course a semester that requires a written paper. Take a combination of lecture, discussion, and lab courses, rather than all lectures.

Timing of classes. If you have auditory attention problems, don't schedule three classes in a row. Take a break between classes, and schedule only two or three classes each day. Select classes that meet two or three times a week for a shorter period of time, rather than for a three-hour block once a week. If you have problems taking notes, short frequent classes allow you to review your notes and clarify what you missed. Three-hour classes put an enormous strain on anyone's note-taking ability and attention span.

"They walk all the way with you . . .

CORY: "The LD program has been great. They give you so much, and walk all the way with you. For example, if you needed a phonetic dictionary, the program would make an effort to find it. It's such a neat thing to run into people like that. But I think college is about learning to stand on your own and doing it by yourself. And that can't be forgotten. It's important to find a balance, some kind of monitoring so the students only get what they really need. Sometimes the LD specialists need to say, 'Wait a minute, you're taking us for a ride here.'

"I've also had good experiences with peer tutors. Because of my LD I don't get things the first time through. And in that sense peer tutoring is great. I can just go over it again, as many times as I want, and things are more relaxed. You can discuss things five or six times instead of trying to get it just once from the teacher."

CHRIS: "I think I've grown a lot academically since I came to college. Through the LD program, I've gone back and redone a lot of the basics. I needed to because in high school I just didn't have the patience to fill in the gaps. In fact, I use a lot of the services for LD students on campus: the writing lab, the math lab, and lots of tutors. Tutors really help because they have gone through the courses and know what the teachers' tests are like and what they expect. Study groups are terrific too.

"Several accommodations have been very helpful to me as well. I take a reduced course load, especially when I have a heavy reading course. I also use books on tape, because I learn things much better when I hear them. If I don't understand what I'm reading, I have the books on tape as a backup and I just listen to the parts I don't understand. I tape all my lectures because I'm very poor in notetaking. I use my own notes as well a notetaker's, which I combine with my own; I don't just use someone else's notes. Probably the most helpful accommodation I've had is extended test time; I've studied the material, but I need extra time to put it all down."

MAKING GOOD USE OF LD PROGRAMS

When you get to college you will want to make the best possible use of the services available to you. To do this, you should:

Be aware of the different types of services. (1) Most colleges offer services such as tutoring, writing labs, and math centers that are open to all students. (2) Most colleges also offer access services (auxiliary aids such as taped books and course modifications such as extended time on tests). These are usually provided by the Disabled Student Services Office, which serves all students with special needs. (3) Some colleges provide programs specifically designed for learning disabled students. Some of these LD programs focus on compensatory strategies such as learning how to use a tape recorder to supplement notetaking. Other, even more comprehensive LD programs not only develop compensatory strategies but also offer remediation or work on basic skills. It is important to understand your own needs so you can seek out the most appropriate services for your specific learning disability.

Make the most of the services available. Students at a college with access services need to let the personnel in the DSS office know what arrangements they need. Students who will be working in programs especially designed for LD students need to develop a partnership with their LD specialist. That means discussing your academic progress, problems that may arise, and specific kinds of help you may need. Let your LD specialist know if there is confusion over an assignment, a problem understanding a lecture, or personal problems that interfere with studying. Together you will develop academic strategies and skills, share information, and plan how the time in LD sessions can best be used.

Never lose sight of the importance of independence. Accommodations and compensatory strategies may be necessary and important, but it is easy to become overly dependent on them. It is important to know when a compensatory strategy is no longer necessary. For example, a student who has been working on reading skills may be able to reduce dependence on taped books. Someone whose writing skills have improved may no longer need extended time on an essay test.

Take advantage of counseling services. Because of your learning disability you may come to college with more concerns than other students. Coping with personal problems takes tremendous energy that often interferes with reaching your goal. If a college LD program has a rap group, make time for it. There is no reason to feel that you have to struggle alone with your problems. Both personal and career counseling are well worth the investment in time. They can help you overcome feelings of being frustrated, stuck, or helpless, recognize strengths, and identify opportunities.

"Campus life is a challenge . . .

CORY: "In college they really expect you to do so much on your own, especially thinking. Sometimes teachers seem to be saying: you're in here, let's not have too much discussion, let's go over the material and let's get out of class. In high school, we would get in circles and discuss books and we would have almost a reading seminar. But in college you're expected to get your own discussion or study group going.

"Social life is something else you have to monitor on your own. It's important to keep a perspective, and not get too caught up in studying. But if you go out too much, you get more tired than you realize, and then you can't study. You have to strike a balance, which is very hard.

"Living away from home was also difficult for me last year. Sometimes I would be upset, and it was hard for me to study, but now I love it. It takes a while; it just takes time. That's the thing that got me through last year: realizing that it's OK not knowing what you want. Just give yourself time. I had to tell myself that so often."

CHRIS: "In some ways I find college is easier than high school. I can focus more on what I am really interested in, so I'm motivated to study more. Also there are fewer classes at one time, so my energies are not as spread out as they were in high school. Another thing I like is that between students there is less competition and comparing grades. In other ways, college is much harder. You have to be able to plan your own time, and be responsible for making the most of each day. The reading load is much heavier, and I have to write much more than I ever did in high school. Another problem is that most of the time your entire grade depends on only one or two tests. I get pretty nervous around exam time, but I'm working on ways to reduce the anxiety, and it has really helped my grades.

"Living away from home, being away from my mom, has really been good for me. I really hate to say this, but I needed to get away from my home environment. I wouldn't have predicted that it would have such a positive effect. In high school I was always at home studying. But here in the dorm I find that you can talk to people about so many different things, get help with a hard subject, or just relax and have fun."

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

by Debbie Olufs and Dee Konrad

Here are some specific strategies for success in college. Your LD specialist can help you identify the ones that will work best for you, and together you can develop others as you go along.

Academics as the major priority:
- Read and reread a chapter three, four, or five times, until it is understood.
- Write and rewrite a paper three, four, or five times, until it is error-free.
- Work and rework a math problem three, four, or five times, until it checks out.

Desire to do the best you can:
- Aim at turning in error-free papers.
- Work for and expect an A in a class in your major.
- Be willing to accept a C in a class that is especially hard.
- Be realistic about what can or cannot be accomplished.
- Accept available assistance in areas in which it is needed.

Test taking:
- Develop mnemonic devices for memorizing lists.
- Organize your time and begin studying early so you don't have to cram.
- Spend the evening before a test making a final review, then go to bed.
- Get up half an hour early and review.
- Answer easier questions first.
- Take advantage of the full time allotted.
- Go over any questionable items.
- Change answers only if you have new information; otherwise, leave them alone.
- Request reasonable testing modifications when appropriate.

Notetaking:
- Sit in the front row during lectures.
- Use notetakers to augment notes, ideally within 24 hours of the lecture.
- Tape record lectures using a battery powered tape recorder with a counter and a pause button that you can press for discussions. Set the counter to zero at the beginning of the lecture and jot down the number when you get to difficult sections.
- Review your notes within 24 hours of the lecture and periodically thereafter.
- Rewrite your notes to augment and clarify ideas.

Time management:
- Schedule regular times to study on a weekly basis.
- Carry a copy of the schedule with you.
- Carry a calendar on which you can schedule appointments and meetings. Develop a time line for major assignments and tests.

"As I think ahead . . .

CORY: "I'm still very confused about myself. I'm still on that roller coaster of feelings. Sometimes, because studying is so hard for me, I find myself asking, 'Why am I doing something I'm not good at?' But more often now I think, 'I really can do this!'—and that's what makes me study.

"As I think ahead, I see that my LD may affect my career choice to some degree. I think I want to get into business, and that means my communication skills need to be sharper. I still work on realizing that I have a learning disability. I have accepted it, but I'm aware that as I go through different changes in life I'll have to reaccept it. It's part of me 100% of the time. It's part of my communication, how I hear things, and how I see things. I'll keep working on it even after I get out of college.

"I think because of my LD it's harder for my parents to let go, but they're great about it. So many times they have accepted my decision about something, and told me that it's up to me. And even though they tell me go ahead with no strings attached, I know they still really care."

CHRIS: "I guess my LD is affecting my career choice, just like it touches everything else in my life. I was thinking about a career in education, but I was afraid that I might harm the students in some way, teach them wrong. So then I though I might try business. But after some business courses I decided that with my math problems, calculations and reports and sales charts weren't for me. I'd like to do something in art or photography, but I just wouldn't make any money at it. So now I'm thinking about education again, and I may work with LD students. Because it was such a struggle for me, I would like to make it a bit easier for the next person.

"I think both my parents are really pleased to see me developing some independence. My dad really likes it, and he's noticed the change. And my mom too, even though she wanted to keep me in the nest. Now that I've gone away, I think she realizes that it was the best thing, that college was the best choice for me."

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS (Continued)

Study skills:
- Find a neat, distraction-free environment (away from phones and other interruptions).
- Keep personal lists of difficult spelling or vocabulary words.
- Using a three-ring notebook, develop a method for organizing lecture notes, text notes, handouts, etc.

Math:
- Carry a calculator for fast, accurate calculation.
- For difficult word problems, look for vocabulary clues to identify the correct operation. Estimate the answer before working out the solution.
- When time allows, check all your answers.
- If you have trouble with negative or other algebraic signs, circle them in red so that you pay closer attention to them.

Reading:
- Read assignments before the lectures.
- Interact with the text; stop and ask yourself questions.
- Make a vocabulary card index.
- Use helpful textbook features such as introductory paragraphs, summaries, questions, charts, and graphs.
- Listen to books on tape.
- Outline chapters, particularly the difficult sections.

Writing:
- Be sure you understand the writing assignment. Do not guess or assume what is required. If you are at all unsure, *ask*.
- Choose a topic you will enjoy writing about. Focus carefully; beware of a subject that is too broad or too narrow.
- Consider talking your ideas into a tape recorder before you start to write.
- Consider carefully these four elements of writing:

  Organization. Have an introductory paragraph with a thesis statement; include three, four, or more paragraphs of support for the thesis; end with a short concluding statement. (Make the conclusion short.)

  Development. Be sure to fulfill what you promised in the thesis. Use transitional words as you move from one point to another.

  Style. Use appropriate language; use different kinds of sentences.

  Mechanics. Use commas correctly; use the apostrophe appropriately; capitalize proper nouns and first words in sentences; use semicolons if you are sure of the usage; be sure subjects and verbs agree; write full sentences, not fragments.
- Revise and proofread more than once.
- Read your work aloud.
- Exchange assignments with a friend and proofread each other's writing.
- Let the work "cool off" for as long as possible; then go back and review.

GLOSSARY

Access. Entrance to and full participation in college. Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act states that a handicap should not prevent an otherwise qualified student from fully participating in college. You have a legal right to reasonable modifications such as a taped version or to extended time on college entrance tests so college will be accessible.

Accommodation. Any reasonable modification that adapts course instruction or course requirements to your specific learning disability. Accommodations make college accessible. Notetakers, readers, taped books, modified papers, oral exams, and extended time on tests are examples of accommodations.

Advising. A process of assisting students to select appropriate academic courses. Students must aggressively seek out good advising. Colleges with comprehensive LD programs often provide advising for their students.

Advocacy. Informing faculty of student rights; assisting students with obtaining reasonable accommodations; intervening when there is resistance to providing accommodations. Self-advocacy is articulating your own needs and negotiating for your own accommodations.

Books on tape. Taped books, including textbooks, which are available for dyslexic students from Recordings for the Blind. The special variable-speed tape player you will need is available free from the Library of Congress, and can be ordered through your local library. The DSS office at any university can assist you in getting taped books.

Compensatory strategies. Strategies that help you learn while you bypass your learning disability. For example, if you have spelling problems, or poor auditory memory, using a tape recorder in class to supplement written notes is a compensatory strategy.

Counseling. Help with resolving personal problems or developing career options. The amount of experience the personal and career counselors have with learning disabilities varies from college to college. Colleges with comprehensive LD programs are more likely to have counselors who are aware of the special needs of LD students.

Diagnostic testing. A series of tests designed to help you understand your learning disability, your strengths and weaknesses, and how you learn best. Most college LD programs either require a recent diagnostic evaluation or provide testing as part of the application process. Diagnostic testing usually includes tests of overall intelligence, basic academic skills, and information processing abilities.

GLOSSARY (Continued)

Disabled Student Services (DSS). A person or office in the university that provides access and accommodations for any student with special needs. Not all DSS personnel have experience with learning disabilities, and they will not even know about you unless you identify yourself. You must contact the DSS office, explain your specific learning disability, and request the services that you need.

Extended time. An additional amount of time allowed on a test, so that you have a fair opportunity to complete it. Such arrangements are usually proctored by the DSS office or the LD program.

LD Specialist. A person specifically trained to teach LD students, usually someone with a masters degree in LD or in Special Education with a concentration in LD. Most specialists are qualified in both testing and remediation, and can teach you in a way that takes into account your learning disability. In some programs LD specialists include graduate students completing a masters degree program.

Notetaker. Another student in your class with whom the DSS office or LD program has arranged to provide you with a set of notes. In some cases you can arrange for transcribers and typists if you need to dictate your written work.

Remediation. Work on basic skills, such as reading, spelling, math, or study skills. Remedial work is best done with an LD specialist, either through a comprehensive LD program or through a college learning lab that has an LD specialist on the staff.

Summer orientation. A program during the summer before the freshman year that prepares you for college courses. Usually there is work on basic skills, study skills, compensatory strategies, and self-advocacy. Some LD programs require summer orientation.

Support services. The entire range of advocacy, accommodations, compensatory strategies, remedial work, tutoring, advising, and counseling available to LD students. The types of support services range from minimal access services at some colleges to comprehensive programs that provide all the above.

Tutoring. Assistance with coursework. Tutors are peers or graduate students who are majors in a particular subject. They have already taken the course, but are not specifically trained in learning disabilities. Tutoring is often provided free by academic departments or by learning labs. Peer tutoring can also be arranged through the DSS office or the LD program.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Organizations:
Information about colleges and college services for learning disabled students is available from the following organizations:

ACLD (Association for Children with Learning Disabilities). 4156 Library Road, Pittsburgh, PA (1-412-341-1515).

AHSSPPE (Association of Handicapped Student Services Personnel in Post-Secondary Education). P.O. Box 21192, Columbus, OH (1-614-488-4972).

HEATH (Higher Education and the Handicapped) Resource Center, The National Clearinghouse on Post-Secondary Education for the Handicapped. One DuPont Circle, Suite 670, Washington, D.C. (1-800-54-HEATH).

Directories:
College guides are helpful but not comprehensive or fully current. Read them carefully to determine the types and amounts of services provided by each college listed. It is important to determine whether the services are provided by LD specialists, regular teachers, graduate students, or peers.

Charles Mangrum and Stephen Strichart. *Peterson's Guide to Colleges with Programs for Learning Disabled Students*. Peterson's Guides, P.O. Box 2123, Princeton, NJ 68540.

Charles Straughn and Marvelle Colby. *Lovejoy's College Guide for the Learning Disabled*. Simon and Schuster, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020.

National Association of College Admissions Counselors. *Directory of College Programs for LD Students*. Suite 500, 9933 Lawler Avenue, Skokie, IL 60077.

Publications:

Questions Teens Ask about Learning Disabilities. Group Services Department, The 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10128. ($3.50)

Carol Wren and Laura Segal. *College Students with Learning Disabilities*. Project Learning Strategies, SAC 220, DePaul University, 2323 N. Seminary, Chicago, IL 60614. ($1.00)

Barbara Scheiber and Jean Talpers. *Unlocking Potential: College and Other Choices for Learning Disabled People—A Step-by-Step Guide*. Adler and Adler Publishers, 4550 Montgomery, Bethesda, MD 20814. ($12.95)

C. Leonard Davis, Marge Jacobs, Jane Dollahan, Arnold Jaeger, and Teddi Marici. *A Guide for Parents of College-bound Learning Disabled High School Students*. The Long Island University Project, Library Learning Center 519, Long Island University, Brooklyn, NY 11201.

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